

I claim:

- 1 1. A method for controlling access to digital information, comprising:
2 storing digital information in an encrypted form on a host system; and
3 reproducing the digital information using a media player application on the
4 host system, said reproducing step including degrading a reproduction
5 quality of the digital information based on at least one of a time condition
6 and a use condition.

- 1 2. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
2 storing data on the host system which correlates a first type of decryption
3 key with a first type of reproduction quality degradation performed based on at
4 least one of said time condition and said use condition;
5 storing said first type of decryption key on the host system;
6 comparing said first type of decryption key to the data stored on the host
7 system to identify said first type of reproduction quality degradation,
8 wherein said reproducing step includes degrading the reproduction quality
9 of the digital information in accordance with the first type of reproduction quality
10 degradation identified in said comparing step.

1 3. The method of claim 2, further comprising:
2 storing additional data on the host system which correlates a second type
3 of decryption key with information which indicates that the digital information is
4 to be reproduced without degradation in quality;
5 storing said second type of decryption key on the host system; and
6 comparing said second type of decryption key to the additional data stored
7 on the host system,
8 wherein said reproducing step includes reproducing the digital
9 information on said media player application without degradation in quality based
10 on said additional data comparing step.

1 4. The method of claim 3, wherein said information which indicates that the
2 digital information is to be reproduced without degradation in quality instructs
3 said media player application to permanently prevent the first type of reproduction
4 quality degradation indicated by said first type of decryption key.

1 5. The method of claim 1, wherein said reproducing step includes degrading
2 the reproduction quality of the digital information by altering a decompression of
3 the digital information.

1 6. The method of claim 1, wherein said reproducing step includes degrading

2 the reproduction quality of the digital information by altering a rendering of the
3 digital information.

1 7. The method of claim 1, wherein the host system is one of a personal
2 computer, a personal digital assistant, and a digital set-top box.

1 8. The method of claim 1, wherein the media player application includes
2 tamper-resistant software.

1 9. A method for controlling access to digital information, comprising:
2 acquiring digital information for reproduction on a host system;
3 sending the digital information to the host system with a first decryption
4 key, said first decryption key instructing an application program on the host
5 system to degrade the reproduction quality of the digital information based on at
6 least one of a time condition and a use condition.

1 10. The method of claim 9, further comprising:
2 receiving information from a user of the host system, said information
3 indicating a desire to have unrestricted access to the digital information; and
4 sending a second decryption key to the host system, said second decryption
5 key instructing the application program to reproduce the digital information

6 without degradation in quality.

1 11. The method of claim 10, wherein said second decryption key instructs the
2 application program to reproduce the digital information without degradation.

1 12. The method of claim 9, wherein said first decryption key instructs the
2 application program to degrade the reproduction quality of the digital information
3 by altering a decompression of the digital information.

1 13. The method of claim 9, wherein said first decryption key instructs the
2 application program to degrade the reproduction quality of the digital information
3 by altering a rendering of the digital information.

1 14. The method of claim 9, wherein said sending step includes:
2 sending the application program with the digital information and said first
3 decryption key.

1 15. The method of claim 14, wherein the application program performs a
2 tamper-resistance function when executed on the host system.

- 1 16. The method of claim 14, further comprising:
2 storing data in the application program which correlates said first
3 decryption key with a first type of reproduction quality degradation performed
4 based on at least one of said time condition and said use condition, wherein the
5 application program performs the first type of reproduction quality degradation
6 when executed on the host system.
- 1 17. The method of claim 16, further comprising:
2 storing additional data in the application program which correlates a
3 second decryption key with information indicating that the digital information is
4 to be reproduced by the application without degradation in quality; and
5 sending said second decryption key to the host system,
6 wherein said application program compares said second decryption key to
7 said additional data and then reproduces the digital information without
8 degradation in quality.
- 1 18. The method of claim 17, wherein said second decryption key instructs the
2 application program to permanently prevent the reproduction quality degradation
3 of the digital information performed by said first decryption key.
- 4 19. The method of claim 16, further comprising:

2 storing additional data in the application program which correlates a
3 second decryption key with a second type of reproduction quality degradation,
4 said second type of reproduction quality degradation being less severe than the
5 first type of reproduction quality degradation;
6 sending said second decryption key to the host system,
7 wherein said application program compares said second decryption key to
8 said additional data and then reproduces the digital information with said second
9 type of reproduction quality degradation.

1 20. The method of claim 11, further comprising:
2 defining a pricing structure wherein said second decryption key is priced
3 higher than said first decryption key.

1 21. A method for controlling access of digital information, comprising:
2 storing digital information in an encrypted form on a host system;
3 reproducing said digital information a first time with a first quality of
4 reproduction, and
5 reproducing said digital information a second time with a second quality of
6 reproduction, said second quality of reproduction being degraded relative to said
7 first quality of reproduction.

8 22. A method for controlling access of digital information, comprising:
9 providing digital information to a host system, said host system including
10 an application program for reproducing the digital information; and
11 providing a decryption key to the host system which instructs the
12 application program to prevent the digital information from being reproduced
13 after the digital information has been reproduced a predetermined number of
14 times.

1 23. A method for controlling access of digital information, comprising:
2 storing digital information in an encrypted form on a host system;
3 storing an application program for reproducing the digital information on
4 the host system;
5 storing a first decryption key on the host system; and
6 activating the application program to reproduce the digital information on
7 the host system, said application program reproducing the digital information
8 based on said first decryption key, said first decryption key controlling said
9 application program to reproduce only a portion of the digital information.

1 24. The method of claim 23, further comprising:
2 storing a second decryption key on the host system,
3 wherein said application program reproduces the digital information a

- 4 second time based said second decryption key, said second decryption key
controlling said application program to reproduce all of the digital information.

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